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42 ZILLA PARISHADS Govt appoints BNP leaders as administrators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed administrators to 42 zilla parishads (district councils) across the country, all of whom are BNP leaders.

The new administrators will serve until further notice, according to a gazette issued by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives yesterday.

PMO officials said the appointments were made to strengthen local governance and accelerate development activities at the district level via the zilla parishads, many of which had been operating without elected representatives since the political changeover in August 2024.

Until now, deputy commissioners had been serving as administrators of the zilla parishads.

Government and party sources said the

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A long line of vehicles outside the Trust Filling Station (not in frame) near the Bijoy Sarani intersection in the capital yesterday. Since the US-Israel war on Iran, queues have been long at the pumps. Fuel rationing was imposed, but yesterday all restrictions were withdrawn.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Queues still snake from filling stations

Govt withdraws fuel rationing

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Filling stations in Dhaka, Chattogram, and Gazipur saw long queues yesterday even though the government has lifted the restrictions on fuel distribution.

Many people rushed to pumps with drums and bottles to collect fuel, as sales without vehicles had been prohibited for more than a week.

With power cuts already taking place in parts of the capital, small businesses such as mills and workshops, as well as offices and buildings that run generators, flocked to petrol pumps.

Up to 300 megawatts (MW) of load-shedding was recorded yesterday, and in the previous two days, it reached as high as 500MW during daytime peak hours, showed data from the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh.

The authorities yesterday met petrol pump owners, business leaders, and district administrations across the country and instructed them to keep track of whether scarcity re-emerges in the market.

It will take some time for the situation to fully ease, according to officials.

The authorities have taken a fair decision ahead of the Eid rush, said Mohammad Nazmul Haque, president of the Bangladesh Petroleum Dealers, Distributors, Agents and Petrol Pump Owners Association, following a meeting with Anindya Islam Amit, the state minister for power, energy, and mineral resources.

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Local govt polls not BNP's priority yet

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The ruling BNP has yet to begin preparations for the local government elections, as its central leadership is occupied with government duties, leaving them with little time to reorganise its grassroots structure for the next electoral contest.

"The government has more urgent matters to deal with right now," said a BNP standing committee member asking not to be named to speak candidly on the issue.

After winning the national election and forming the government, the BNP has had little time to organise itself, according to multiple standing committee members.

Many of its senior leaders now hold positions in the government and their days are filled with cabinet meetings, parliamentary duties, responding to global developments and implementing the party's election pledges.

"If we do not give time to organise the party properly, the other parties may gain an advantage," the leader said.

From the central leadership in Dhaka to district and upazila organisers, many leaders are currently involved in state responsibilities.

"That means the party itself has not yet returned to its normal activities," said a Dhaka north unit BNP leader seeking anonymity.

However, seven district level leaders said that the delay is already becoming noticeable.

Rivals have already begun informal campaigning in some areas. Local meetings are being held, activists are visiting communities and party supporters are beginning to prepare for the next elections.

"Our preparations have not started properly yet. If we delay it too long, it could affect us politically," said an

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Jamaat gears up for local polls

MAMUNUR RASHID

After contesting the February 12 national election as part of an alliance, Jamaat-e-Islami has begun preparations to take part in the local government polls independently.

The party is working to identify potential candidates for mayoral posts in city corporations and municipalities, as well as chairman posts in district, upazila, and union parishads. District and metropolitan units have already been instructed to prepare preliminary lists of prospective nominees.

Central leaders say some of the lists have reached the party headquarters, while others are expected after Eid. Once the process is completed, Jamaat plans to finalise candidates initially for 12 city corporations, including the two in Dhaka. Nominees for district, municipality, upazila, and union parishad polls will later be selected locally, with emphasis on grassroots opinion and locally acceptable figures.

Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, Jamaat assistant secretary general and head of its central publicity department, told The Daily Star that the party was moving ahead with the idea of contesting local government polls independently and without party symbols. He said district and upazila units were informed of the decision immediately after the parliamentary polls.

"The government will decide the election schedule, but prospective candidates also need to remain active in

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FARMERS' TK 10,000 LOANS Govt asks banks to write them off, withdraw cases



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to pay the loans and interest owed to banks for farmers whose debts have been waived, on the condition that all cases filed against those farmers are withdrawn.

The conditions were outlined in a directive sent by the finance ministry to Bangladesh Bank yesterday. The move is part of the BNP's election pledge to waive agricultural loans of up to Tk 10,000, including interest.

According to the directive, the government will settle liabilities arising from the write-off of loans and interest up to Tk 10,000 through budget allocations. For this purpose, Tk 1,568 crore has been earmarked in the revised budget for the current fiscal year.

Of the total amount, about 54 percent will be paid by Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank and Bangladesh Krishi Bank, while the remaining amount will be distributed among other state

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CANAL RESTORATION PM launches nationwide drive today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to visit Dinajpur today to inaugurate a nationwide canal excavation and re-excavation programme aimed at improving irrigation, restoring water flow, and strengthening rural water management.

The initiative revives a programme originally introduced by BNP founder and late president Ziaur Rahman, who launched canal excavation across the country. The ruling BNP government is restarting the programme in line with its election manifesto.

The prime minister will formally inaugurate the nationwide programme through the re-excavation of a 12-kilometre canal in the Balrampur Sahapara area of Kaharol upazila in Dinajpur. The inauguration ceremony will be held virtually while excavation work begins at the site.

In the first phase, the programme will be implemented in 54 districts across the country. On the same day, ministers, state ministers, whips and members of parliament will inaugurate similar excavation programmes in other districts.

According to the schedule released by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Tarique will fly from Dhaka to Saidpur Airport this morning. From there, he will travel by road

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Three workers electrocuted to death

Two others also injured when a crane hit a power line

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three workers were electrocuted to death and two others injured after a crane came into contact with an overhead power line in the Kharapa area of Khilkhet in the capital yesterday.

The deceased are Rajib Hossain, 25, of Fuljhuri village in Barguna Sadar; Razzak Miya, 57, of Basuki village in Barguna Sadar; and Farid Jaman, 64, of Battachor village in Jamalpur's Bakshiganj upazila, said police.

Khilkhet Police Station Sub-Inspector Reazul Jabbar said the incident took place around 4:00pm when Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco) was installing underground power lines in the area.

Around 20-25 workers were on site when five were electrocuted and taken to Kurmitola General Hospital, where doctors declared three dead, he added.

Desco Chief Engineer Manjurul Haque said workers from a subcontracting company hired by Desco have been laying underground electric wires over the past month.

"Today, around 4:30pm, workers were unloading cables from a truck using a crane. When the crane touched an overhead power line, five of them got electrocuted. Later, three of them died," he added.

Police are investigating the incident, the SI said.



People through the roadside clothing stalls to complete their Eid shopping at the Gulistan area yesterday around noon.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

War further clouds private credit demand

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PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 16

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:54	12:45	4:30	6:10	7:45
JAMAAT	5:04	1:15	4:45	6:20
				8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
26	16		6:10
27	17	4:50	6:10
28	18	4:49	6:10